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canceled again by the vehicles because the devices along the route are intended to be used primarily to ensure safety but not to perform logistical measures.

[Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 6, line 8, with the following rewritten paragraph:

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In still another aspect of the invention, the virtual coupling is canceled when faults are detected in the distance-maintaining system. The virtual coupling of trains is intended, to be canceled in particular when faults occur in the distance control system because, given faulty distance control, it is no longer ensured that the successive vehicles do not indeed come dangerously close to one another. When the virtual coupling is canceled, which is possible at any time, the devices along the route are again presented with completely separate trains which are to be treated separately.

Page 6, between lines 17 and 18 has been amended to include the following heading:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Page 6, between lines 24 and 25 has been amended to include the following heading:

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

On page 13, line 1, please replace "Patent Claims" with --WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:--

In the Claims

Please amend the claims as follows.

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1. (Amended) A method for reducing data traffic between track-bound vehicles traveling along a route and devices along the route, comprising:
registering a vehicle request to be allowed to travel along the route;

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and assigning permission to vehicles to travel along the route according to predefined rules; the vehicles determining their respective location, wherein the vehicles traveling ahead are moved closer to vehicles behind up to their braking distance,

wherein the vehicles are virtually coupled,

wherein the virtually coupled vehicles move forward together, but independently of one another, using a vehicle-mounted distance-maintaining system,

and the devices along the route treat the virtually coupled vehicles as a single vehicle train whose front is determined by the front vehicle of the vehicles which were previously traveling ahead and whose rear is determined by the rear vehicle of the vehicles which were previously traveling behind.

2. (Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein more than two successive vehicles can be coupled to form a virtual composite vehicle train.

3. (Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein train integrity checks are performed by the vehicles and appropriate messages are transmitted at least indirectly to the devices along the route.

4. (Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein for the braking distance, in addition to the relative braking distance of the successive vehicles or the absolute braking distance of the vehicles behind, safety supplements are taken into account at least for the confidence interval of the locating process, as well as data-transmission and data-acknowledgement times.

5. (Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the virtual coupling of the vehicles is canceled and the devices along the route communicate with the individual vehicles.

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6. (Amended) The method according to claim 5, wherein the vehicles communicating with the devices along the route inform the devices about the vehicles which are coupled to them virtually, and in response to the detection of the cancellation of the virtual coupling, the devices along the route again request at least separate location messages from the vehicles behind one another for the route sections along which they travel.

7. (Amended) The method according to claim 5, wherein after the cancellation of the virtual coupling, the vehicles previously coupled virtually report to the devices along the route and output at least separate location messages for the route sections along which they travel.

8. (Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the virtual coupling of the vehicles is performed or canceled by the vehicles.

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9. (Amended) The method according to claim 5, wherein the virtual coupling is canceled when faults are detected in the distance-maintaining system.

In the Abstract:

Please replace the Abstract in its entirety with the Abstract attached hereto.